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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: FURTHER PROGRESS ON NATO MAP-RELATED

REFORMS

REF: A. SKOPJE 251 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. SKOPJE 420

[1](#)1. (U) The Macedonian Parliament recently adopted several judicial and defense reforms that demonstrate further progress in meeting Macedonia's NATO MAP requirements. On May 5, the parliament amended the Law on Defense, formally ending conscription. The amended law will make the Army of the Republic of Macedonia a completely professional army as of October 2006, one year ahead of schedule. It also allows the government to deploy troops for NATO missions without parliamentary approval, once Macedonia becomes a NATO member. Parliamentary approval would still be required to deploy troops for non-NATO missions abroad. (NOTE: A governing coalition MP told Poloff last week that the parliament would vote on May 22 to renew the mandate for Macedonian troop deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and to approve a new deployment of Macedonian peacekeepers to Bosnia-Herzegovina. We expect the parliament will renew the Iraq and Afghanistan deployments, and to approve the new deployment to BiH, with little or no political opposition. END NOTE.)

[1](#)2. (U) Several judicial reform laws adopted by parliament in the first two weeks of May marked yet another important step forward in Macedonia's progress toward meeting its NATO MAP requirements, completing the bulk of the legislation envisioned under Macedonia's National Strategy for Judicial Reform. The Law on Courts, for example, establishes an administrative court that will reduce the Supreme Court's caseload by allowing the new court to hear cases against state institutions. The law also established two new local courts in Skopje, one to hear criminal cases and the other to hear civil cases. The Law on the State Judicial Council establishes an independent body to elect and dismiss judges. Laws on administrative disputes, on mediation, and on private lawyers will also, once implemented, contribute to strengthening the independence and efficiency of the judiciary.

[1](#)3. (SBU) COMMENT: Adoption of these judicial and defense reform laws demonstrates progress toward meeting Macedonia's NATO MAP requirements. U.S. PermRep to NATO Victoria Nuland, during her visit to Skopje in March (ref A), focused on the need to pass the judicial reform laws by mid-2007 as one of several necessary conditions for demonstrating Macedonia's

fitness for possible NATO membership by the 2008 summit. Adoption of the reforms shows that the government is committed to moving ahead with its MAP agenda, despite the upcoming parliamentary elections on July 5 and the inevitable distractions and political tensions that have accompanied the campaign so far (ref B). Full implementation of the new laws is the necessary next step.

WOHLERS